IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

TARA JOHNS 1015 Ruby Circle

Gilbertsville, PA 19525

CIVIL ACTION

Plaintiff,

DOCKET NO.:

v.

MARMAXX OPERATION CORP. d/b/a TJ MAXX 225 E. Swedesford Rd. Wayne, PA 19087

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT

Tara Johns (*hereinafter* referred to as "Plaintiff," unless indicated otherwise), by and through her undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. This action has been initiated by Plaintiff against Marmaxx Operation Corp. (hereinafter referred to as "Defendant") for violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended ("ADA" - 42 USC §§ 12101 et. seq.), the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA - 29 U.S.C. §2601 et. seq.), and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act ("PHRA"). Plaintiff asserts, inter alia, that she was unlawfully terminated from Defendant. As a direct consequence of Defendant's unlawful actions, Plaintiff seeks damages as set forth herein.

¹ Plaintiff's claim under the PHRA is referenced herein for notice purposes. She is required to wait 1 full year before initiating a lawsuit from date of dual-filing with the EEOC. Plaintiff must however file her lawsuit in advance of same because of the date of issuance of her federal right-to-sue letter under the ADA. Plaintiff's PHRA claims however will mirror identically her federal claims under the ADA.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 2. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over the instant action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§1331 and 1343(a)(4) because it arises under laws of the United States and seeks redress for violations of civil rights under the FMLA and the ADA.
- 3. This Court may properly maintain personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant's contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction in order to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in <u>International Shoe Co. v. Washington</u>, 326 U.S. 310 (1945) and its progeny.
- 4. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1391(b)(1) and (b)(2), venue is properly laid in this district because all of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to the claims set forth herein occurred in this judicial district.
- 5. Plaintiff filed a Charge of discrimination and retaliation with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") and also dual-filed said charge with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission ("PHRC"). Plaintiff has properly exhausted her administrative proceedings before initiating this action by timely filing and dual-filing her Charge with the EEOC and PHRC, and by filing the instant lawsuit within 90 days of receiving a right-to-sue letter from the EEOC.

PARTIES

- 6. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
 - 7. Plaintiff is an adult individual, with an address as set forth in the caption.

- 8. Defendant Marmaxx Corporation is a corporation that owns and operations numerous off-price retail stores selling apparel and home fashions.
- 9. At all times relevant herein, Defendant acted by and through its agents, servants and/or employees, each of whom acted at all times relevant herein in the course and scope of their employment with and for Defendant.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- 10. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 11. Plaintiff was employed with Defendant from approximately mid-March 2016 through September 17, 2017.
- 12. At all relevant times herein, Plaintiff was employed with Defendant as an Assistant Manager working under a general/store manager, a district manager, and a regional manager.
- 13. At the time of Plaintiff's involuntary separation on or about September 7, 2017, Plaintiff was primarily supervised by District Manager Paula France, Store Manager Lanetta Mallard, and Regional Manager Celine (last name unknown at this time).
- 14. During Plaintiff's employment with Defendant, she performed her job duties in an exceptional manner and had no disciplinary record.
- 15. On or about May 29, 2017, Plaintiff was involved in a motor vehicle accident wherein Plaintiff suffered serious head and shoulder injuries (for which she still treats) these conditions qualify as disabilities under the ADA.

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- 16. Plaintiff's aforesaid health conditions, at times, limits her ability to perform some daily life activities, including but not limited to seeing, driving, lifting, performing manual labor, working, walking, standing and concentrating.
- 17. Despite Plaintiff's aforementioned disabilities and limitations, she was a dedicated and hard-working employee for Defendant who was able to perform the duties of her job well; however, Plaintiff did require reasonable medical accommodations at times (as discussed below).
- 18. As a result of Plaintiff's May 29 accident and injuries, Plaintiff would on occasion require intermittent time off to treat and care for her conditions, as well as time off when she was experiencing flare-ups related to her conditions. Therefore, in approximately June/July of 2017, Plaintiff sought and was approved for intermittent medical leave (as an accommodation and under the FMLA).
- 19. In addition to intermittent time off, Plaintiff's also requested medical accommodations including but not limited to schedule adjustments, lifting accommodations and the ability to take periodic (and infrequent) breaks as needed.
- 20. While all of Plaintiff's requested accommodations were more than reasonable and Plaintiff used her FMLA time sparingly Defendant's management, including but not limited to France would subject Plaintiff to discriminatory comments and antagonism about her need for reasonable accommodations and her health conditions, including but not limited to repeatedly forcing Plaintiff to work outside of the medical restrictions her doctors had placed on Plaintiff and expressing hostility towards Plaintiff's need for reasonable accommodations.
- 21. In addition, managers of Defendant became very frustrated with employees taking or seeking FMLA, and supervisory employees including but not limited to France would make

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very derogatory comments about people abusing FMLA, using too much FMLA, and implying that employees were taking FMLA unnecessarily.

- 22. Shortly before her termination, Plaintiff expressed several concerns to Defendant's management, including but not limited to France, regarding the discriminatory treatment and antagonism she was receiving based on her actual/perceived disabilities and/or her need for/use of reasonable medical accommodations, including that she was concerned that her medical restrictions were not being honored by Defendant and she was being forced to violate those medical restrictions. However, Defendant's management never properly investigated or resolved Plaintiff's aforesaid concerns of discriminatory mistreatment and this mistreatment of Plaintiff continued.
- 23. On or about September 17, 2017, shortly after expressing her concerns of discriminatory treatment and immediately following Plaintiff taking several days of FMLA leave, Plaintiff was informed that she was being terminated from her employment with Defendant.
- 24. Plaintiff was terminated from Defendant for allegedly using another employee's code on the register. However, this practice was extremely common for managers and assistant store managers to do when the store was busy, and Plaintiff was singled out for termination after being subjected to discriminatory treatment in relation to her disabilities and need for reasonable accommodations and expressing concerns that her medical restrictions were not being honored.
- 25. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that she was subjected to a hostile work environment and terminated as a result of her actual/perceived/record of disabilities, in retaliation for requesting accommodations (including FMLA leave), and/or in retaliation for

expressing concerns about discriminatory mistreatment being exhibited by Defendant's management.

First Cause of Action <u>Violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as Amended ("ADAAA")</u> ([1] Actual/Perceived/Record of Disability Discrimination; [2] Retaliation; [3] Failure to Accommodate; [4] Hostile Work Environment)

- 26. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 27. Plaintiff suffered from qualifying health conditions under the ADA (as amended) which affected her ability (at times) to perform some daily life activities, as described *supra*.
- 28. Plaintiff requested reasonable accommodations from Defendant, including but not limited to intermittent time off, lifting accommodations, the ability to take periodic (but infrequent) breaks, and scheduling adjustments.
- 29. In response to Plaintiff's health conditions and need for reasonable accommodations, Plaintiff was subjected to hostility and animosity by Defendant's management through discriminatory comments, disparate treatment, and pretextual admonishment.
- 30. Plaintiff expressed concerns to Defendant's management regarding the discriminatory mistreatment that she was being subjected to; however, her concerns were never properly addressed or resolved in any meaningful way.
- 31. Plaintiff was eventually terminated from her employment with Defendant for completely pretextual reasons.
- 32. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that Defendant discriminated against Plaintiff by subjecting her to a hostile work environment, issuing her pretextual discipline, and ultimately terminating her employment because of: (1) her known and/or perceived health problems; (2) her record of impairment; and/or (3) her complaints of discrimination.

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33. These actions as aforesaid constitute violations of the ADAAA.

Second Cause of Action <u>Violations of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA")</u> (Interference and Retaliation)

- 34. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 35. Plaintiff was an eligible employee under the definitional terms of the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2611(a)(i)(ii).
- 36. Plaintiff requested leave from Defendant, her employer, with whom she had been employed for at least twelve months pursuant to the requirements of 29 U.S.C.A § 2611(2)(i).
- 37. Plaintiff had at least 1,250 hours of service with the Defendant during her last full year of employment.
- 38. Defendant is engaged in an industry affecting commerce and employs fifty (50) or more employees for each working day during each of the twenty (20) or more calendar work weeks in the current or proceeding calendar year, pursuant to 29 U.S.C.A § 2611(4)(A)(i).
- 39. Plaintiff was entitled to receive leave pursuant to 29 U.S.C.A § 2612 (a)(1) for a total of twelve (12) work weeks of leave on a block or intermittent basis.
- 40. Defendant committed interference and retaliation violations of the FMLA by: (1) disciplining and terminating Plaintiff for requesting and/or exercising her FMLA rights and/or for taking FMLA-qualifying leave; (2) by considering Plaintiff's FMLA leave needs in making the decision to issue her discipline and/or terminate her; (3) preventing Plaintiff from utilizing her approved leave as needed; and (4) disciplining and/or terminating Plaintiff to prevent her from taking further FMLA-qualifying leave in the future.
 - 41. These actions as aforesaid constitute violations of the FMLA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:

- A. Defendant is to be prohibited from continuing to maintain its illegal policy, practice or custom of discriminating/retaliating against employees and are to be ordered to promulgate an effective policy against such unlawful acts and to adhere thereto;
- B. Defendant is to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendant's illegal actions, including but not limited to past lost earnings, future lost earnings, salary, pay increases, bonuses, medical and other benefits, training, promotions, pension, and seniority. Plaintiff should be accorded those benefits illegally withheld from the date she first suffered retaliation/discrimination at the hands of Defendant until the date of verdict;
- C. Plaintiff is to be awarded liquidated and/or punitive damages, as permitted by applicable law(s) alleged asserted herein, in an amount believed by the Court or trier of fact to be appropriate to punish Defendant for its willful, deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct and to deter Defendant or other employers from engaging in such misconduct in the future;
- D. Plaintiff is to be accorded any and all other equitable and legal relief as the Court deems just, proper and appropriate including for emotional distress;
- E. Plaintiff is to be awarded the costs and expenses of this action and reasonable legal fees as provided by applicable federal and state law;
- F. Any verdict in favor of Plaintiff is to be molded by the Court to maximize the financial recovery available to Plaintiff in light of the caps on certain damages set forth in applicable federal law; and

G. Plaintiff's claims are to receive a trial by jury to the extent allowed by applicable law. Plaintiff has also endorsed this demand on the caption of this Complaint in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF & CERUTTI, P.C.

Ari R. Karpf, Esq.

3331 Street Road

Two Greenwood Square

Building 2, Ste. 128

Bensalem, PA 19020

(215) 639-0801

Dated: May 2, 2018

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CIVIL ACTION

Telephone	FAX Numbe	r E-M	fail Address	
(215) 639-0801	(215) 639-4970	akarpf(@karpf-law.com	
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Tara Joh	ns ,	,	CIVIL ACTION	

(Civ. 660) 10/02

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

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FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA — DESIGNATION FORM to a assignment to appropriate calendar,	se used by counsel to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of	ìſ				
Address of Plaintiff: 1015 Ruby Circle, Gilbertsville, PA 19525						
Address of Defendant: 225 E. Swedesford Road, Wayne, PA 19087						
Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: Defendant's place of business						
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Does this civil action involve a nongovernmental corporate party with any parent corporation a		,				
(Artach two copies of the Disclosure Statement Form in accordance with Fed.R.Civ.P. 7.1(a)) YesC No.20					
Does this case involve multidistrict litigation possibilities?	YesD No.					
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Civil cases are deemed related when yes is answered to any of the following questions:	•					
1. Is this case related to properly included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one ye	sar previously terminated action in this court?					
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ARBITRATION CERT: (Check Appropriate Ca	itegory)					
1. Ari R. Karpf , counsel of record do hereby certif. M. Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, Section 3(c)(2), that to the best of my knowledge and 1						
\$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs;	of any of the simm of					
Relief other than monotery damages is sought.						
DATE: 5/2/2018	ARK2484					
Attomoy-at-Law	ARK2484 Attorney l.D.# 91538					
NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by Jury only if the	re has been compliance with P.R.C.P. 38.					
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is not period to any case now pending or except as noted above.	within one year previously terminated action in this court					
5/2/2018	ARK2484					
DATE: Statemoy-at-Law	Attorney 1D.# 91538					
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JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the

purpose or initiating the civil of	ocket sneet. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF			
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(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Montgomery (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Montgomery (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.			
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Karpf, Karpf & Cerutti, Suite 128, Bensalem, PA		d, Two Greenwood			
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	ICTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)	III. CITIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintif
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IV. NATURE OF SUIT		ly)	- viaga country	Click here for: Nature	of Suit Code Descriptions.
110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise 210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability 290 All Other Real Property	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury 360 Other Personal Injury 460 Other Personal Injury 414 Voting 442 Voting 443 Housing/ Accommodations 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other 448 Education	PERSONAL INJUR' 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 367 Health Care' Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPER 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage Product Liability Habeas Corpus: 463 Alien Detainee 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence 530 General 535 Death Penalty Other: 540 Mandamus & Othe 550 Civil Rights 550 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement	of Property 21 USC 881 G 690 Other TY 710 Fair Labor Standards Act Relations 740 Railway Labor Act 751 Family and Medical Leave Act 790 Other Labor Litigation Type Employee Retirement Income Security Act 462 Naturalization Application	. 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 . 423 Withdrawal	375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit 490 Cable/Sat TV 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange 891 Agricultural Acts 893 Environmental Matters 895 Freedom of Information Act 896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	ON ADA (42USC121 Brief description of ca	.01); FMLA (29US	e filing (Do not cite jurisdictional state C2601)		21000110
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	O CHECK IF THIS UNDER RULE 2	IS A CLASS ACTION		CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	if demanded in complaint: XYes 'No
VIII. RELATED CASE IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE		DOCKETNUMBER	
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